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## PROFESSOR OTTO PFLEIDERER—THE CHARACTER OF THE MAN AND HIS WORK.

By REV. P. M. SNYDER,

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The name of Professor Otto Pfleiderer, of the theological faculty of the Berlin University, is becoming more and more widely known in America, partly by works originally published in English, and partly by translations of his German publications, the most of which are now accessible to English readers. At the same time, few of the leading thinkers of Germany are more completely misjudged save by such as have taken pains to become familiar with the real spirit of the man—a fact quite sufficiently demonstrated by the character of the criticism sometimes appearing even in our most ably edited papers. Indeed, it is scarcely possible for such a man to be understood apart from his surroundings. The entire intellectual and religious atmosphere of Germany is so different from that of the United States that it requires no small amount of sympathetic study to enable an American to appreciate the standpoint of a man who is thinking among and for Germans. He needs constantly to bear in mind that biblical criticism which seems to him chiefly negative may be laying the foundations of faith for more skeptical readers, and that a religious philosophy which appears dangerously pantheistic in its tendencies may come as the revelation of a living God to one who has already felt the blight of materialism or of a genuine pantheism.

For this reason it is perhaps unfortunate that Prof. Pfleiderer has been known in America so largely in connection with the more radical theories of New Testament criticism. We are relatively much more disturbed by anything which threatens our faith in the integrity and inspiration of the Bible than we are by any mere freedom of philosophical speculation. At least in New England, theological controversy has been so unrestrained that we are no longer seriously alarmed by the

utterances of any one who accepts the Bible in its entirety as an infallible revelation of religious doctrine, and contents himself with giving his own interpretation to its teachings. On the other hand, the higher criticism is still commonly regarded as thoroughly dangerous, even in its conservative application to the Old Testament; while a man who questions the historical accuracy of the Gospels, or suggests that Paul may not have written some of the words commonly ascribed to him, is looked upon as a possible heretic of the most malignant type.

This being the case, the average American reader can scarcely avoid being shocked at the calm way in which Prof. Pfleiderer assumes the post-apostolic origin of much of the New Testament; while few are able to realize that to half the scholars of Germany this seems almost self-evident, and still fewer take the pains to weigh the evidence upon which such conclusions rest. So it is very natural, especially after reading such an outline sketch as the little course of Hibbert lectures on the Influence of Paul, simply to condemn the radical positions of the author and straightway relegate him to that mysterious army of "German critics" who are supposed to stand in intimate connection with the Mephistophelian powers of negation, and to devote all the resources of patient erudition to the endeavor to "destroy the Bible"—whatever that may mean, now that it is no longer burned.

In the same way, however, even his philosophical conception of God and his relation to the universe differs as widely from our popular anthropomorphic representations that it is very easy simply to emphasize a few striking features of his teaching, such as his affirmation of the eternity of the universe and denial of the strictly supernatural, and then to brand him as a pantheist. In fact, I have been assured in Berlin itself, and that by people who ought to know better, both that Prof. Pfleiderer belongs to Baur's school of criticism, in which there is only a measure of truth, and also that he is a pantheist, in which there is just about as much truth as there would be in a similar assertion about the apostle Paul.

On the other hand, there are few masters of German philosophy and theology whose fundamental conceptions of God

and his relation to the world and to man would be more warmly welcomed by our best and most earnest thinkers, if they could find a patient and unprejudiced hearing.

The very best that Prof. Pfeiderer does and is has as yet made but the slightest impression upon America; and, indeed, it can scarcely be fully appreciated without knowing him in his native land and coming under the spell of his wonderful personality.

First of all, no one can do him justice who does not appreciate his magnificent stand against the popular Ritschlian theology, his insistence that a temporary orthodoxy shall not be purchased at the price of undermining the faith of the future, that a nominal confessionism shall not be maintained by throwing the self-revelation of God in Christ out of all relation to his self-revelation in nature and in history.

We think of German critics and theologians as carrying on this work in an atmosphere of the broadest and most congenial toleration; but we forget that a superficial orthodoxy is popular just now in the empire. We forget that a man like Prof. Pfeiderer goes on semester after semester teaching what he believes to be the truth in the plainest and most explicit terms, utterly refusing to cover up his meaning or to make dishonest use of the language of orthodoxy, all the while knowing that the strongest party in the church would be glad to see him driven from his chair, and that his students injure their prospects for ecclesiastical appointment by attending his lectures. Yet these things are true, and when the accounts are made up the names of many such will be found among those who have been persecuted for righteousness sake.

Again, no one can do Prof. Pfeiderer justice who does not appreciate the intense theism which underlies his Pauline "pantheism." It is perfectly true that he rejects the dualistic conception of an extraneous God whose present influence upon the world consists largely in an occasional "interference" with its laws, and he carries this rejection to the point of denying the supernatural altogether; but it is equally true that, for Prof. Pfeiderer, this God, who accomplishes even his highest purposes through and not despite the forces and processes of the universe, is a personal, living,

loving God, who is our God and Father, and whose good pleasure it is to bring his children into spiritual accord and fellowship with himself.

All his teaching concerning the relation of God and man is pervaded by the same spirit. Everything rests upon the kinship of the human spirit to the Divine. No one could insist with more inexorable logic that all the certainty even of our knowledge of nature depends upon the higher Unity to whom the order of nature and the laws of human thought are alike to be referred. So no one could trace with more loving enthusiasm the training, educating grace of God, even in the lower stages of the world's life, or emphasize more strongly the indwelling of his spirit in the hearts of his people.

In his Christology, Prof. Pfleiderer is as relentlessly logical as he is in his whole conception of Christianity. He is the unswerving enemy of all tri-theism, and his Christ is a divine man and not a human God. The humanity of Jesus he asserts in the most unqualified terms, declaring that the soulship of Christ and of the Christian differ in degree and not in kind. Accepting the wonderful in the life of Jesus, he denies the strictly miraculous, including the resurrection of his body, and thinks that Jesus himself doubtless believed in the speedy visible coming of the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, he constantly emphasizes the reality of the divine soulship of the Master, as of the first-born among many brethren; and every one who really listens to his teachings must be touched by the intensity of his conviction that in very truth God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

I have touched upon a few points in Prof. Pfleiderer's religious philosophy because it is in this that he is probably least understood in America, while it is as a philosopher rather than even as a critic of the New Testament that he shows his wonderful acuteness and grasp of thought. Indeed, even in his "Paulinism," of which unfortunately only the first edition has been translated, and in his still untranslated "Urchristenthum," that which gives these works their unique value is his marvelous philosophic insight and analytic power, rather than even his great familiarity with the historic and critical material.

In mere textual criticism Prof. Pfeiderer rests somewhat heavily upon the investigations of others: but as a philosopher he calls no man master; and it is this fact combined with his absolute candor, which has enabled him to give such a complete representation of the Pauline theology. In connection with no other part of the New Testament is one so impressed with the grasp and clearness of his thought or with the fairness of his investigation. Fortunately for Prof. Pfeiderer's criticism, he has not the least desire to prove that Paul taught his, Pfeiderer's, theology. His view of inspiration is sufficiently elastic to free him from all sense of responsibility for Paul's statements and to enable him to follow the great apostle with equal faithfulness in the highest and most spiritual conceptions of Christian truth, and in what he believes to be Pharisaical notions of redemption and rabbinical methods of interpreting the Old Testament. The result is a most wonderful analysis of Paul's theology, and that which would most surprise some of Prof. Pfeiderer's condemners—not his real critics—is the amazing orthodoxy of the picture. It would be difficult, for instance, to find a theologian in the United States who shows as clearly and unanswerably the vicariousness of the atonement as taught by Paul or, indeed, who brings out as distinctly all the great Pauline doctrines. This Prof. Pfeiderer is able to do, partly because he has no ready-made conclusions at which he must arrive, no Cinderella's slippers to which the apostle's foot must be made to conform. Both his power and his charm lie in the fact that he so evidently and successfully endeavors to show just what the apostle said and just what he meant by it; not what we should have said under like circumstances or what we should have meant by Paul's language, but exactly what the apostle meant by the particular language that he used—a kind of exegesis, by the way, of which neither the orthodoxy nor the heterodoxy of America has any superfluity.

There is one other characteristic of Prof. Pfeiderer's which can never be understood from his books and which is yet one of the most important elements in that strange influence which he exerts over his students. I refer to his intense

earnestness, his unaffected piety, in the best sense of the word, his whole kindly, lovable personality. To understand these things one needs to sit day after day in his classroom and to share the genial hospitality of his unpretending suburban home.

The best that Prof. Pfeiderer gives to his students will never be printed. That is when he turns away from his manuscript and talks about some truth of the Kingdom till the students forget their note-taking and listen with bated breath as if every word were for them an inspiration. It is at such times that one realizes how positive is Prof. Pfeiderer's faith, and how earnestly and tenderly this discredited teacher strives to quicken and purify all that is best and most Christ-like in the hearts of his hearers. It is at such times that one can understand how this relentless critic is yet one of the most humble and loving disciples of Jesus. Then it is no surprise to hear that one of the most thoughtful of his students was converted by him from pantheism, or when another tells how he had long ago given up the faith of his childhood but is now beginning to find something to rest upon. No one can understand Prof. Pfeiderer who has not gone out of his lecture room time and again touched, awed, uplifted. Only such can feel with what real consecration all his striving is turned to the upbuilding and not to the overturning of the Master's Kingdom.

To complete the picture, one needs an insight into the personal home-life of this remarkable man. It is seldom that in one man are united such diverse qualities; such philosophic acumen and relentless logic with so earnest and devoted a piety, and these in turn with so much of wholesome heartiness, a practical Christian liberty which has gone far toward solving the problem of using the world as not abusing it. To fully appreciate Prof. Pfeiderer's theology one should have sat at his table, listened to his hearty laugh, marked the almost childlike enthusiasm of his conversation, received the impression of his cordial greeting, seen the merry-making of his children. Such personal contact will go farther than much abstract speculation toward enabling one to enter sympathetically into his thought and purpose.

In this sketch I have made no attempt at completeness of statement, much less to criticise or even analyze any one of Prof. Pfeleiderer's many works; but rather to call attention to a few prominent characteristics of the man and his theological position. I have done this as a tribute of personal affection and admiration, hoping in some slight degree to pave the way for a more sympathetic appreciation on the part of the many in our own country by whom his influence is sure to be felt.

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## THE EXPEDITION OF THE BABYLONIAN EXPLO- RATION FUND.

### C. BAGHDAD TO NIFFER.

By ROBERT FRANCIS HARPER, Ph. D.,

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Only three of our party could accept the invitation to dine at the residency. The others were too tired to dress. One of them, in fact, was very ill and had to leave the party in Baghdad to enter the English hospital. Two Sepoys with lanterns came to our quarters to escort us to the residency, and on our arrival we filed through the ranks of 30 or 40 more. It is needless to say that every one enjoyed the only good dinner that had fallen to his lot for two or three months.

It was late in the season (Jan. 8th) and we hoped to leave Baghdad after a very short stay, but the Wali Pasha was ill and we could not get away until we had been received by him. In the meantime—two weeks—we had nothing to do but to amuse ourselves in the bazaars and cafés. Mr. Field and I purchased two full Arab outfits for use in camp. After two weeks, the Wali had recovered sufficiently to grant us an audience. We were to go in state. The eventful day ar-